Among the Thugs

Book Review

Name

Class

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Introduction

"Among the Thugs" is a book that has been written by Bill Buford in 1991. The book provides an insight into the experiences of Bill Buford with the Hooligans of football in the United Kingdom.

The book has been divided into three different sections and it offers the chronological experiences of Bill Buford from 1982 to 1990. In the first section, the authored explored Northern Italy, Northern England and Wales as a Marshall scholar while living in UK. Section two of the books addresses different events of football in mid 80s, where different sporting events were explored by Buford at Cambridge University and in other wealthy regions of UK. Section three of the book draws upon a conclusion describing teams of Englishmen playing with some of their top competitors: Sardinia team in southern Italy and the Dusseldorf team in Germany.

The roadmap of the book shows that Buford started his journey by introducing himself to the firm of Manchester United, where he interacted with Mick, who taught him about different lessons related to football and football companies in specific.

Throughout Buford's journey, he made efforts to gain an insight into the reasons behind football violence as well as what it means to be a member of a football company. He provided detailed insight into the emotions and feelings involves in becoming the part of a crowd and provided reasons to readers that why violence in crowds is considered to be an important component of society.

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Summary

The book “Among the Thugs” has been written by Bill Buford in 1991. Buford was living in England since last fifteen years, and he showed interest to make himself familiarize with the supporters of football and what causes them to show a high level of motivation for getting engaged in violent behavior.

Buford identified the groups of racist, xenophobic, furiously nationalistic and violent young men, most of them working in blue collar highly paying jobs, who showed pleasure in hurting people and destroying property. He also recognized the strong factors of latent homosexuality in the male bonding that appeared to be highly destructive. Following his subjects to contests in Sardinia, Germany and Italy to local matches, Buford reported that they appear to be similar wherever they go.

The basic purpose of the book is to investigate the cases of violence of crowd, specifically in the perspective of football supporter “companies”. This examination was begun by Buford by simply defining the violence from the external viewpoint to present the depth of destruction in front of readers. Buford showed a perspective in which readers are able to see people who show disrespect towards others, destroy property and senselessly beat others.

However, it has been shortly explained by Buford that as a part of this crowd, he started to gain insight into the situation of violence in a crowd. He further communicated a message that people prevent to act like humans when they become a part of crowd, and they rather tend to become a part of something less identifiable and larger.

The main argument that has been developed by Buford is about violence in crowd of English football fans and they are considered to be individual of bored working class who are detached

from society. In this book, the arguments of Buford mainly revolved around the functions of community, compassion towards people who show despicable actions and economic forces behind the group violence. In order to support his arguments, Buford compiled the interviews that he conducted with the football fans and professionals. His arguments were mainly focused on providing an ultimate glimpse into the violent world and elaborating the major cause that prompted football supporters to engage in such kind of behavior.

As the book was concluded, Buford considered the reasons for which the eagerness was shown by young Englishmen to begin a riot. He argued that the brain endorphins are produced as a result of riots and these endorphins appear to be same as drug ingestion. For the football supporters, the riot was carried out just for the purpose of fun.

Creating riot is also another way to feel that they are linked to their community and can carry out noble actions that are bigger than their own selves. Simply put, they riot because it’s fun. It’s also an instant way to feel that they’re connected to their community and can act in "noble" ways that are larger than themselves.

This book is ethnographic research in which the qualitative research method has been used by researcher to interact with or study the behavior and action of people in real world scenario. In this book, the author studied the football hooliganism in the United Kingdom. In this book, the key finding was that violence cannot be incited in crowds against their will. He made an argument that a collective decision is made by people in a crowd that whether they should cross the thresholds of violence or not.

Analysis

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I agree with the argument put forth by the author because I think that violence is generally carried out by people in a crowd. This kind of violence not only create disturbances in the event, rather it turned out to be a major reason for killing, destroying and erupting anything that comes on its path. In majority of the cases, the violent supporters often get caught and beaten by the police.

I agree with Buford in claiming that reports of hooligan violence generally ranges from stabbings to beatings to the supporter biting out the eye of the police officer. In majority of the cases, the violent supporters were found to be drunk, rude and they appeared to be louder to others. They not only make the football event worse, rather they also hurt the people around the city, on the roads and in the streets.

The strength of the study is that it is considered to be an urgently relevant and timely work. The author experienced the heyday of media with the supporters of the English football players. The book was highly effective in describing the vandalized cities beyond the beliefs of supporters. The author gained a practical insight into the deaths that were mainly caused because of the increased violent activities in crowd both outside and inside of the football ground. In short, the book has proven to be effective in describing the football hooliganism as a major problem of society.

The book provided explanations about the practical journey of Buford in the football stadium of England. It also presented some useful information about different violent acts that have taken place in football stadium. The start of Buford's journey made readers amazed and shocked as he presented experiences in different and exciting ways. It enabled the reader to know about the reality through the lens of authors.

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The formal interviews with the hooligans were not conducted by Buford. He did not communicate with them, rather he made necessary observations about their behavior. The major strength of the book is that it provided a reflection about the participation of author in the activities of football supporters. For most of the part, he ate with them, he traveled with them, he smoked with them, and he drank with them. In short, he became the part of that community but he did not engage himself in any kind of violent behavior. He ensured his presence around the supporters but he did not vandalize anything.

Another major strength of the book is that it did not provide any false information about the experiences of Buford. The reality of the Buford's experiences are filtered through his perceptions, his emotions and his mind. The entire experiences of Buford have been described on the account of first person. The experiences of Buford were immersed into the violent subculture of England.

The weakness of the research paper is that it is entirely based on the observation and persona experiences of Buford. The book lacks behind in recording and reporting the personal experiences of Englishmen football supporters. Conducting interviews with the supporters might have helped author in exploring different reasons for which they engage themselves in some kind of violent behavior.

The observations sometimes prove to be wrong because every person has different perception and he/she might think from a different mindset than another person. There is a high level of subjective bias in the study. It is mainly because of the reason that observer made use of the interpretive lens to inevitably filter the observations.

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For example, it has been discussed in the book that hooligans have shown increased involvement in violent activities. This is considered to be a societal problem that has affected the members of society in negative way. In our class readings, I have learned that players have created a demand to bring social change in our society, particularly with respect to the development of proper policies in society to prevent violent behaviors.

Conclusion

Throughout this review, a light has shed upon the experiences of author with the football hooligans. He observed that these football supporters were highly engaged in violent behavior and they entered into a strong dispute with policemen. They were eventually beaten by policemen, as a result of which the football ground appeared to be more like a war ground than a playground.

As far as my personal thoughts about the book "Among the Thugs" are concerned, I found that book appeared to be funny in the start, but gradually it took the form of a more serious tone as high level of violence was being observed by Buford along the disgusting debauchery instances and terrifying moments in which the violent behaviors took the form of a war between policemen and supporters.

After reading the book, I have learned that the book is highly corresponding the hatred and fear towards others. A number of things about the condition of human have been taught and retaught to me by this book. I was well aware of the fact that I am living in the world of crazy people but the book helped me to learn that world is much crazier than I think. From this book, I have learned about both the epic descriptions of the intellectual totality and insane violence of human psyche.

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The overall takeaway of the book is that people often crosses over the limit from the relative calmness and peacefulness to the extreme level of destruction and violence. The documentary approach and the personal observations of Buford were highly instructive. I have learned that violence needs to be fixed by rioters because society of Englishmen is somehow reorganizing itself.

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